

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Previously Amended) A method for validating gaming vouchers dispensed from an on-line electronic gaming machine, comprising the steps of:

receiving pay-out voucher identification information at a wireless, portable computer device, said pay-out voucher identification information corresponding to a pay-out voucher dispensed from an on-line electronic gaming machine at the termination of a gaming session;

automatically transmitting from the on-line electronic gaming machine, contemporaneously with dispensing the pay-out voucher, said pay-out voucher identification information and a related pay-out amount to a central network computer through an on-line gaming system connection;

creating and storing a voucher record in a pay-out voucher database in response to said pay-out voucher identification information, and storing said pay-out amount in connection therewith;

transmitting, over a wireless connection, a pay-out voucher validation request from the wireless, portable computer device to a remote wireless interface, said remote wireless interface connected to the central network computer;

conveying the pay-out voucher validation request from the remote wireless interface to the central network computer;

retrieving the voucher record in the pay-out voucher database based upon said pay-out voucher identification information;

confirming, based on payment information in said voucher record, that the corresponding pay-out voucher has not yet been paid;

updating said voucher record to indicate that the pay-out voucher has been paid;

transmitting, via said remote wireless interface, a voucher pay-out approval from said central network computer to said wireless, portable computer device if said voucher record was found and not yet paid, or else a voucher pay-out

disapproval if either said voucher record was not found or else the pay-out voucher was already paid; and

displaying an indication of said voucher pay-out approval or voucher pay-out disapproval on-screen at said wireless, portable computer device.

2. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

reading the pay-out amount from said voucher record;

transmitting, along with said voucher pay-out approval indication, said pay-out amount from the central network computer to said wireless, portable computer device via said remote interface; and

displaying said pay-out amount at said wireless, portable computer device.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 3, wherein said voucher identification information comprises a machine identifier and a time stamp indicating a time at which the pay-out voucher was initially dispensed.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said wireless, portable computer device comprises a personal digital assistant.

6. (Previously Amended) A system for validating gaming pay-out vouchers dispensed from an on-line electronic gaming machine, the system comprising:

a wireless, portable computer device, said wireless, portable computer device comprising a display, a data input interface, and a radio transceiver;

a remote wireless interface capable of communicating with said radio transceiver;

a central computer connected to said remote wireless interface and to an on-line gaming machine, said central computer programmed with a voucher verification program and configured to receive pay-out voucher identification information and a

pay-out amount generated by the on-line electronic gaming machine when a pay-out voucher is dispensed to a player from the on-line electronic gaming machine at the termination of a gaming session; and

a pay-out voucher database connected to said central computer;

wherein said central computer generates and stores pay-out voucher records in said pay-out voucher database in response to receiving the pay-out voucher identification and pay-out amount from the on-line electronic gaming machine;

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wherein said voucher verification program receives voucher validation requests electronically from said wireless, portable computer device via said remote wireless interface, confirms the existence of a corresponding voucher record in said pay-out voucher database, confirms by checking the voucher record that the pay-out voucher has not yet been paid, updates the voucher record, if unpaid, to reflect that the pay-out voucher has been paid, and sends, via said wireless interface, a voucher pay-out approval indication to said wireless, portable computer device if the pay-out voucher was not yet paid, or else a voucher pay-out disapproval indication to said wireless, portable computer device; and

wherein said wireless, portable computer device receives through its data input interface voucher validation request information relating to pay-out vouchers dispensed from the on-line electronic gaming machines, transmits voucher validation requests to said central computer via its radio transceiver, and displays voucher pay-out approval and disapproval indications on its display in response to receiving them from said central computer.

7. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 6, wherein said voucher verification program reads a pay-out amount from said voucher record, if unpaid, and sends, via said wireless interface, said pay-out amount to said portable computer device along with said voucher pay-out approval indication; and

wherein said wireless, portable computer device displays said pay-out amount on its display.

8. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 6, further comprising a gaming machine interface connected between said central computer and one or more electronic gaming machines including said on-line gaming machine, wherein the electronic gaming machines transmit pay-out voucher identification information and a pay-out amount to said central computer via said gaming machine interface each time a pay-out voucher is dispensed from the electronic gaming machine, and wherein said central computer creates and stores a voucher record in said pay-out voucher database in response to said pay-out voucher identification information and said pay-out amount.

C) 9. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 8, wherein said voucher identification information comprises a machine identifier and a time stamp indicating a time at which the pay-out voucher was initially dispensed.

won't 10. (Original) The system of claim 6, wherein said wireless, portable computer device comprises a personal digital assistant.

11. (Original) The system of claim 10, wherein said data input interface of said personal digital assistant comprises a keyboard or keypad.

12. (Original) The system of claim 10, wherein said data input interface of said personal digital assistant comprises a touchscreen or stylus.

13. (Previously Amended) A method for on-line or off-line validation of gaming pay-out vouchers dispensed from an electronic gaming machine, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving voucher identification information at a wireless, portable computer device, said voucher identification information corresponding to a pay-out voucher dispensed from an electronic gaming machine;

transmitting, over a wireless connection, a voucher validation request from the wireless, portable computer device to a remote wireless interface, said remote wireless interface connected to a central network computer;

conveying the voucher validation request from the remote wireless interface to the central network computer;

attempting to retrieve a voucher record in a voucher database based upon said voucher identification information;

confirming, if said voucher record was retrieved, that the corresponding pay-out voucher has not yet been paid based on payment information in said voucher record, and transmitting, via said remote wireless interface, a voucher pay-out approval from said central network computer to a said wireless, portable computer device if the pay-out voucher was not yet paid, or else a voucher pay-out disapproval if the pay-out voucher was already paid;

displaying, if said voucher record was retrieved, an indication of said voucher pay-out approval or voucher pay-out disapproval on-screen at said wireless, portable computer device;

transmitting, if said voucher record could not be retrieved, a voucher record unavailable indication from said central network computer, via said remote wireless interface, to said wireless, portable computer device;

receiving said voucher record unavailable indication at said wireless, portable computer device and, in response thereto, displaying an error message;

receiving a voucher amount at said wireless, remote computer device after displaying said error message;

transmitting said voucher amount and said voucher identification information, via said wireless interface, to said central network computer from said wireless, portable computer device; and

preparing a voucher database reconciliation record at said central network computer for updating said voucher database at a subsequent time to reflect that the pay-out voucher has been paid.

14. (Previously Amended) The method of claim13, further comprising the step of, in connection with transmitting said voucher pay-out approval to said wireless, portable computer device, updating said voucher record to indicate that the pay-out voucher has been paid.

15. (Original) The method of claim 13, further comprising the steps of:
reading a pay-out amount from said voucher record;

transmitting, along with said voucher pay-out approval indication, said pay-out amount from the central network computer to said portable computer device via said remote transmitter; and

displaying said pay-out amount at said portable computer device.

16. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 13, further comprising the steps of:

transmitting from an electronic gaming machine, when the pay-out voucher is initially dispensed, said voucher identification information and the pay-out amount to said central network computer; and

creating and storing a voucher record in said voucher database in response to said voucher identification information.

17. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein said voucher identification information comprises a machine identifier and a time stamp indicating a time at which the pay-out voucher was initially dispensed.

18. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein said wireless, portable computer device comprises a personal digital assistant.

19. (Previously Amended) A system for validating gaming pay-out vouchers dispensed from an electronic gaming machine, the system comprising:

a plurality of wireless, portable pay-out verification devices, each of said wireless, portable pay-out verification devices comprising a display, a data input interface, and a radio transceiver;

a remote wireless interface capable of communicating with the radio transceivers of said wireless, portable pay-out verification devices and distinguishing transmissions therefrom;

a central computer connected to said remote wireless interface, said central computer programmed with a pay-out voucher verification program and configured

to receive pay-out voucher identification information and a pay-out amount generated and automatically conveyed by the on-line electronic gaming machine when a pay-out voucher is dispensed to a player from the on-line electronic gaming machine at the termination of a gaming session; and

a pay-out voucher database connected to said central computer;

wherein said central computer generates and stores pay-out voucher records in said pay-out voucher database in response to receiving the pay-out voucher identification and pay-out amount automatically conveyed by the on-line electronic gaming machine; and

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wherein said voucher verification program receives pay-out voucher validation requests electronically from said wireless, portable pay-out verification devices via said remote wireless interface, confirms the existence of a corresponding voucher record in said pay-out voucher database for each received pay-out voucher validation request, confirms from the pay-out voucher database that the pay-out voucher has not yet been paid, updates the voucher record, if unpaid, to reflect that the pay-out voucher has been paid, and sends, via said wireless interface, a voucher pay-out approval indication to the wireless, portable pay-out verification device originally sending the pay-out voucher validation request if the pay-out voucher was not yet paid, or else a voucher pay-out disapproval indication; and

wherein each wireless, portable pay-out verification device transmitting a pay-out voucher validation request receives the pay-out voucher validation request information relating to pay-out vouchers through its data input interface, transmits pay-out voucher validation requests to said central computer via its radio transceiver, and displays voucher pay-out approval and disapproval indications on its display in response to receiving them from said central computer.

20. (Original) The system of claim 19, wherein said voucher verification program reads a pay-out amount from the corresponding voucher record, if unpaid, and sends, via said wireless interface, said pay-out amount to the requesting portable computer device along with said voucher pay-out approval indication; and

wherein the wireless, portable computer device receiving said pay-out amount displays it.

21. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 19, further comprising a gaming machine interface connected between said central computer and one or more electronic gaming machines including said on-line electronic gaming machine, wherein an electronic gaming machine transmits pay-out voucher identification information and a related pay-out amount to said central computer via said gaming machine interface each time a pay-out voucher is dispensed from the electronic gaming machine, and wherein said central computer creates and stores a voucher record in said pay-out voucher database in response to said voucher identification information and the pay-out amount.

22. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 21, wherein said pay-out voucher identification information comprises a machine identifier and a time stamp indicating a time at which the pay-out voucher was initially dispensed.

23. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 19, wherein each of said wireless, portable pay-out verification devices comprises a personal digital assistant.

24. (Previously Amended) A system for validating pay-out vouchers dispensed from on-line electronic gaming machines, the system comprising:

a central computer;

a pay-out voucher database accessible to said central computer, storing pay-out voucher information and related pay-out amounts generated and automatically conveyed by a plurality of on-line electronic gaming machines when pay-out vouchers are dispensed at the termination of player gaming sessions, each of said pay-out vouchers representing an accumulated pay-out amount payable to the player;

a plurality of wireless computer devices adapted for manual transport, each of said wireless computer devices comprising a display, a data input interface, and a wireless transceiver; and

a wireless interface communicatively coupled to said central computer, capable of communicating with the wireless transceivers of said wireless computer devices;

wherein said central computer receives pay-out voucher validation requests electronically from said wireless computer devices via said wireless interface, confirms by checking the pay-out voucher database that a given pay-out voucher has not yet been paid, and sends to the wireless computer device that sent the pay-out voucher validation request, via said wireless interface, either a voucher pay-out approval indication or else a voucher pay-out disapproval indication depending upon whether the pay-out voucher was previously paid; and

wherein each of said wireless computer devices is configured to receive pay-out voucher identification information through its data input interface from pay-out vouchers dispensed by the on-line electronic gaming machines, to transmit pay-out voucher validation requests to said central computer via its wireless transceiver in response to receiving the pay-out voucher identification information through its data input interface, and to display voucher pay-out approval and disapproval indications from the central computer on its display.

25. (Previously Added) The system of claim 24, wherein said central computer updates the pay-out voucher database when sending a pay-out approval indication to reflect that the pay-out voucher has been paid.

26. (Previously Added) The system of claim 24, wherein said central computer and electronic gaming machines are connected in an on-line gaming system configuration, the system further comprising a gaming machine interface via which the electronic gaming machines convey voucher identification information and voucher pay-out amounts to the pay-out voucher database when pay-out vouchers are dispensed from the electronic gaming machines.

27. (Withdrawn)

28. (Withdrawn)

29. (Withdrawn)

30. (Withdrawn)

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31. (Provisionally Withdrawn) A method for validating gaming pay-out vouchers dispensed from an electronic gaming machine, comprising the steps of:

conducting a gaming session at an on-line electronic gaming machine;

accumulating a credit amount from the gaming session at the on-line electronic gaming machine;

receiving, at the on-line electronic gaming machine, an instruction from a player to issue a pay-out voucher;

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issuing a pay-out voucher from the on-line electronic gaming machine in response to receiving said instruction, the pay-out voucher comprising a unique voucher identifier and representing an accumulated credit amount payable to the player;

contemporaneously with issuing the pay-out voucher, transmitting from the on-line electronic gaming machine voucher pay-out transaction information including the unique voucher identifier and a pay-out amount representing the accumulated credit amount to a central computer network via an on-line gaming interface;

receiving at the central network computer, from the on-line electronic gaming machine, voucher pay-out transaction information including the unique voucher identifier and the pay-out amount corresponding to a pay-out voucher dispensed from the on-line electronic gaming machine;

creating and storing a voucher record in a voucher database in response to said voucher pay-out transaction information;

receiving by manual or semi-manual input said voucher identifier at a wireless, portable computer device;

transmitting, over a wireless connection, a voucher validation request from the wireless, portable computer device to a remote wireless interface, said remote wireless interface connected to the central network computer;

conveying the voucher validation request from the remote wireless interface to the central network computer;

retrieving a voucher record in a voucher database in response to said voucher validation request;

confirming from the voucher record that the corresponding pay-out voucher has not yet been paid;

updating said voucher record to indicate that the pay-out voucher has been paid;

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transmitting, via said remote wireless interface, a voucher pay-out approval from the central network computer to a said wireless, portable computer device if said voucher record was found and not yet paid, or else a voucher pay-out disapproval if either said voucher record was not found or if the pay-out voucher was already paid; and

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displaying an indication of said voucher pay-out approval or voucher pay-out disapproval at said wireless, portable computer device.

32. (Provisionally Withdrawn) The method of claim 31, further comprising the steps of:

reading a pay-out amount from said voucher record;

transmitting, along with said voucher pay-out approval indication, said pay-out amount from the central network computer to said wireless, portable computer device via said remote wireless interface; and

displaying said pay-out amount at said wireless, portable computer device.

33. (Previously Amended) A system for validating gaming pay-out vouchers dispensed from on-line electronic gaming machines used by players, the system comprising:

a central computer programmed with a pay-out voucher verification program and configured to receive pay-out voucher identification information and a related

pay-out amount generated and automatically conveyed by an on-line electronic gaming machine when a pay-out voucher is dispensed to a player from the on-line electronic gaming machine at the termination of a gaming session;

a pay-out voucher database comprising pay-out voucher records; and

a plurality of wireless computer devices adapted for manual transport and configured for use by gaming establishment personnel, each of said wireless computer devices comprising

C) a data input interface configured to receive manually or semi-manually entered pay-out voucher identification information based upon information existing on the pay-out vouchers dispensed from the on-line electronic gaming machines;

cancel a wireless transceiver configured to communicate with said central computer via a remote wireless interface and transmit voucher validation requests thereby, and to receive validation responses from the central computer, and

a display configured to display information pertaining to the validation responses received from the central computer.

34. (Previously Amended) The system of claim 33, wherein the pay-out vouchers are dispensed from the on-line electronic gaming machines at the termination of gaming sessions in response to player pay-out requests and reflect amounts of gaming machine credit accumulated during the gaming sessions.

Provisional Election

Applicants provisionally elect to proceed with the claims identified in Group I (i.e., claims 1-2, 4-26). In addition, it appears that claims 33-34 were inadvertently omitted in the groupings set forth in the Office Action. It is respectfully submitted that claims 33-34 are properly classifiable in Group I, as they relate to a technique for validating gaming pay-out vouchers.

This election is made with traverse with respect to Group III. The reason is that the claims in Groups I and III appear to be sufficiently related such that they may be searched and examined together without undue burden. Although the Group III claims are characterized in the September 18, 2003 Office Action as being directed to a "gaming apparatus," in fact claimed method involves system components including an "on-line electronic gaming machine" and a "central network computer." Thus, for example, both claims 1 and 31 (from Groups I and III, respectively) are directed to methods for validating gaming vouchers in the context of a system having an on-line electronic gaming machine and a central network computer. It is therefore respectfully submitted that there would be minimal additional burden in searching and examining the Group I and III claims together, and that restriction is unnecessary.

Please withdraw claims 27-30 (the Group II claims) from consideration. If the Examiner does not withdraw the restriction requirement as between Groups I and III, then kindly withdraw claims 31-32 (the Group III claims) from consideration also.

Request for Allowance

It is believed that the present application stands in condition for further examination, and early allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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